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SUBJECT: ESTONIAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S REPORT TO THE
PARLIAMENT

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Foreign Minister Urmas Paet presented his semi-annual foreign policy report to the Estonian Parliament on June 6. On June 15 MFA Policy Planning Director Raul Malk (co-author of the speech) told us key take-aways included: a warning that Estonia was at risk of overextension with the number of international military missions in which it participated; notice that Estonia was becoming less euro-skeptical in its approach to the EU?; more like Ireland and Finland, less like the UK?; expressions of concern over the political influence that Russian investments could have on Estonia; and, a signal the GOE would go forward with plans to extend Estonia's military mission in Iraq. Opposition MP and Foreign Affairs Committee Deputy Chairman Marko Mihkelson told us he was disappointed Paet made no references to critical issues farther afield, such as Iran. End summary.

SECURITY ISSUES

¶2. (U) Paet reaffirmed Estonia's commitment to the NATO ?8/40? criterion. Estonia will follow through on its promise to have 350 deployable troops by 2010. Only so are we trustworthy allies. Our trustworthiness is the best guarantee of our international security,? Paet said. Paet also underscored that NATO was not just a military organization, but a ?political-military one.? He noted that Estonia currently has 244 military personnel deployed on foreign missions, including 40 in Iraq, 80 in Afghanistan, 89 in Kosovo, 33 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the future, it would be critical ?not to disperse (Estonia's) strength, but rather to limit the number of missions.?

¶3. (U) Paet said Afghanistan was the most important mission for the Estonian Defense Forces. On Iraq, Paet said Estonia would ?remain committed to the UN decision and the endeavors of the Iraqi government.? Paet called Estonia's Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance Program 2006 ? 2010 the country's ?fifth foreign mission.? Support for human rights and democracy elsewhere in the world was fundamental to Estonia's national strategy, and an important part of international security.

¶4. (SBU) MFA Policy Planning Director Raul Malk told us on June 15 that he thought Estonia was ?at the limit? of what it could do in foreign military missions. Looking ahead it would be important to have a more measured approach when taking on new commitments. For example, Malk said Estonia ?had to be a good European? and was committed to participating in the EU's Nordic Battle

Group. But he was not happy that 50 Estonians would likely deploy with the group to Congo in early 2008. ?We can't be in a position of saying ?everyone's doing it, so let's go.??

ESTONIA AND THE EU

¶ 15. (U) In his remarks on the EU, Paet said Estonia had ?made a contribution to restoring the driving force of the engine? by ratifying the Constitutional Treaty. Estonia now must engage in Brussels on a range of critical issues, including the fate of the treaty, Schengen entry, eurozone issues, energy, free movement of labor and services and the Financial Perspective. Estonia would remain steadfastly supportive of enlargement: every additional new Member State ?produces security? simply by fulfilling the accession criteria. Paet also stressed the necessity for close cooperative activities and common analysis of NATO and the EU, because ?the relations between NATO and the EU are, by no means, what they should be.?

¶ 16. (SBU) The MFA's Malk, as well as Prime Minister Andrus Ansip's EU Affairs Advisor Gert Antsu, told us that Parliament and the press missed the key point of Paet's comments: that Estonia had migrated from a ?euro-skeptic? camp over the past several years to a position closer to that of ?Finland or Ireland? welcoming further integration in key areas. Antsu underscored that such views were fully compatible with Estonia's continued strong trans-atlanticist views on security policy.

ECONOMY

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¶ 17. (U) In his remarks FM Paet questioned the possible influence investments ?from abroad? (Russia) might have on Estonia's security. ?The Estonian economy has to become more transparent in order to prevent the emergence of sizeable players with unknown background who might seek to influence the domestic and foreign policy decisions of the country's institutions,? Paet said. With respect to Russian capital, each case had to be viewed separately. Energy was a particularly sensitive area, and one where the three Baltic states shared concerns, such as the rise in the price of energy, the energy systems excessive dependence on Russian monopolies, separation of the Baltic energy grid from the rest of the EU. The EU needed a common energy policy.

¶ 18. (SBU) Commenting on Paet's remarks, the MFA's Malk said Paet's note of caution reflected ?some differences? the MFA had with the Estonian Ministry of Economy on the role of Russian investment. The MFA was undertaking a study focused in particular on Russian investment in media, energy and transit.

REACTION

¶ 19. (SBU) Paet's speech was generally well-received by Estonian media. Many observers credit MFA Counselor (former Defense Minister and future Ambassador to Latvia) Jaak Joerut for having breathed some life into what had become fairly predictable set piece. Opposition MP and Foreign Affairs Committee Vice Chairman Marko Mihkelson (Res Publica) told us he was disappointed that Paet had not delved into topics farther afield from Estonia (such as challenges in

Iran). Mihkelson thought this reflected a lack of experience and fresh ideas among Estonia's foreign policy class. He has proposed that the government fund a robust foreign policy institute that could help develop such expertise.

¶10. Paet's speech can be found at:
http://www.vm.ee/eng/kat_140/7567.html?arhiiv_kuup=kuup_2006

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